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ABSTRACT

As Holocaust study for youth becomes integrated into the U.S. educational structure, educators throughout the country are going to need resources that combine history and humanity to convey to young people the impact of tragedy and violence that World War II and the Holocaust had on the youth of a particular time in the 20th century. This paper provides teachers who work with today's youth with a clearer picture of how people of similar ages reacted to Nazism in Europe. A brief history of the time period is outlined in the paper along with an examination of personal diaries and creative works constructed by children and young people in Europe during World War II and the Holocaust. Background information on a wide range of literary and artistic genres is made available to teachers that will be helpful when designing lesson plans that modern young people will find interesting, innovative, and intriguing. (Contains 47 references.) (BT)

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Holocaust Youth and Creativity.

by

Joanna Clark

SO 031 606

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Joanna Clark

Directed Readings

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Dr. Robitaille

Holocaust Youth and Creativity

Purpose Statement

As Holocaust study for youth becomes integrated into the American educational structure, educators throughout the country are going to need resources that combine history and humanity in order to convey the impact of tragedy and violence that World War II and the Holocaust had on the youth of a particular time in the 20th century to modern young people. This document provides teachers who work with the youth of today with a clearer picture of how people of similar ages reacted to and against Nazism in Europe. A brief history of the time period is outlined in the paper as well as looks at personal diaries and creative works constructed by children and young people in Europe during World War II and the Holocaust. Through this document, background information on a wide range of literary and artistic genres is made available to teachers that will be helpful when designing lesson plans and that modern young people will find interesting, innovative, and intriguing.

An Overview

Some events cannot fully be comprehended with just the natural mind. Particular occurrences that change lives often need to be experienced with the mind, will, and emotions. Certain incidents can affect a person's life in a manner that defies simple, scientific explanation. The birth of a child, the death of a parent, the realization of a

dream or goal - these are all occasions that can radically change a person's life on several different levels. However, when the episode is accompanied by severe brutality and physical and emotional pain, the complexity of the experience multiplies and even fewer words are available to explain the impact. In order for others to better understand the enormity of the occurrence, a degree of empathy is required. When empathy is absent, the event becomes trivialized and is reduced to a set of facts.

One particular incident that requires empathy and that is shared by many people is the Holocaust. When scholars and historians try to offer explanations or reasons for the events leading up to and surrounding the Holocaust, their scholarly, physical knowledge seems to fall short of completely communicating the significance of the experience. History without heart, it seems, does not come close to really communicating the horror and horribleness of the event. Albert H. Friedlander agrees, stating in the introduction to *Out of the Whirlwind: A Reader of Holocaust Literature*:

> . . . we cannot know what happened during the *Shoah* - that whirlwind of destruction in which Hitler's Germany killed six million Jews - solely by learning historical facts and figures and scholarly explanations. Facts, figures, and explanations are necessary. But we must also touch and feel and taste the dark days and the burning nights. Our hearts must constrict in terror and grief. Our minds must expand to make room for the incredible. And our love for the goodness of life must grow strong enough to reach into the darkness and to discover the heart of that darkness, the experience itself. (11)

By trying to "co-experience" the events of World War II and the Holocaust over fifty years after their occurrence, modern humanity finds that too much of what occurred defies comprehension. We, who have never experienced roundups or shootings or life in concentration camps, cannot even begin to fathom the impact of what actually happened to the human soul. Although we try to place ourselves in the ghettos, in the cattle cars, in the blood-strewn pits, we cannot *know* what it was to be a Jew in the 1930s and 1940s in German-controlled lands in Europe. Yet, something draws us to read and to listen and to look. Perhaps this curiosity is born out of the wonder that one human being can treat another human being with so much hate. Maybe we want to know how *anyone*, Jew or German, could survive such conditions and still function within normal society. Possibly our motivations are more selfish. Perhaps we devote study and space to the Holocaust because we do not want it to recur with us as its target.

Whatever the reasons, scholarship, thought, and time should be devoted to Holocaust study simply because no other single event in the twentieth century has had such an impact on so many people. While many facets and approaches to learning about the Holocaust can be taken, an approach that has not been used often is to look at the events of World War II and the Holocaust through the perceptions and experiences of children. Children were especially targeted by the Nazis. Since most were eliminated quickly after arrival at the death camps, relatively few young people were able to survive. However, many youths were able to leave behind diaries, works of literature, and other creative pieces that subsequent generations can read and analyze in order to better understand their experiences during this time of persecution. Since children are often characterized by their honesty, the records and impressions of the Holocaust left by

children may be a more candid, truthful rendering of life under the Nazis than those left by their elder cohorts. However, whether or not these narratives and creative works are more truthful is not the main focus of this paper. Rather, I have undertaken to give a brief look at how children and young people during World War II and the Holocaust reacted to and against Nazi domination in their personal diaries and in their surviving creative works.

Too often we look at the suffering and hardships of the adults in order to define the Holocaust to ourselves. However, we should be considering the experiences of the children as no less bewildering. Just because they were not old enough to fully understand the reasons behind the hate and prejudice does not make their experiences less legitimate or gruesome. A great deal of focus has been given to adult survivors of camps and ghettos because they endured through the harsh years, and they have been sharing their stories since their liberation. We have not heard as many stories from survivors who were children for several reasons. First, the older adults who survived spoke and gave authority to their experiences because of their age. Second, children, upon their liberation, probably wanted to leave that phase of their lives behind and develop an existence apart from their camp or "Jewish" identity. Third, and most significant, the majority of the children who suffered *died.* They lost their ability to speak of their experiences in the gas chambers, mass graves, and crematoria of Nazi design. Therefore, their diaries and surviving creative works are the only "voices" we have left with which to consider their experiences. Personal diaries and works of creativity have become, by necessity, the legacy of a lost youth.

While considering such personal works and experiences, developing some theories or formulae for survival is tempting. We could reason that certain children were able to survive ghettos and concentration camps because, as evidenced in their diaries and creative pieces, they possessed a certain fortitude of character or a tenacity for endurance or a desire to survive. If we find such theories to be successful in the case of children, we could expand on those ideas and develop a theory or system of survival that could be applied to all survivors. Then, perhaps we would have a better understanding of why some perished and some endured.

However, such theories and formulae and systems are erroneous and, although innocent, insulting. Deborah Dwork warns us against such fallacies of reason in the introduction of her book, *Children With A Star: Jewish Youth in Nazi Europe.* According to Dwork,

> There is absolutely no evidence to indicate that survival was due to anything more - or anything less - than luck and fortuitous circumstances. The notion that longevity was due to some "survival strategy" or a special "will to live" is not only arrant nonsense but a pernicious construct. The logical conclusion of such an insidious supposition is to blame the victims in a very subtle, but nevertheless absolutely vicious way. It suggests failure or stupidity on the part of those murdered. If those who survived did so because they were determined, staunch, and firm in their endeavors, the implication is that those who did not survive were undetermined, weak-willed, and irresolute; in short, inadequate to so great a task. (xxxiii-xxxiv)

Dwork maintains, rightly so, that to revere those who survived or to develop a reason for their survival is to dishonor those who did not survive. If we give in to such dishonor, even in the name of trying to "understand," we run the risk of unconsciously buying into Nazi ideology. What would separate our theories and the Nazi theory that Jews were physically or emotionally inferior, other than motivation? Even the unconscious development of such ideas proves that we have learned nothing from the Holocaust.

Therefore, throughout this study, I have not tried to offer speculations or ideas about the moral make-up of those who survived and those who did not. Rather, I have tried, without editorializing, to introduce the reader to individuals who played a role in the Holocaust and to their forms of expression. Although this "study" is not exhaustive, hopefully it will provide those interested in the Holocaust with an avenue toward understanding or "co-experiencing" the events of the Holocaust in the light of actual humanity.

The first part of this study "Hitler and Nazism: Ideology and Practices" provides a general overview of the history of World War II and the Holocaust as well as brief descriptions of particular methods of Nazi oppression. The second part "'God give that this shaming may soon cease': A Picture of WWII Youth Through Their Personal Diaries" searches for similar themes that both Jewish and Gentile youths recorded in their diaries during the war years. The third part "Artistic Resistance: The Indirect Insurrection of Jewish Youth Through the Arts" analyzes recurring themes in short stories, poems, and artistic works created by Jewish young people during the war.

Part I - Hitler and Nazism: Ideology and Practices

Although the Second World War drew to a close over fifty years ago, the events surrounding that war still seem to occupy a place in the world's consciousness. Although the high level of media involvement, the advanced state of technological warfare (for the time), and the involvement of most of the world in the conflict all seem to be factors in accounting for the high levels of study, perhaps the greatest reason for the continued interest in World War II deals with the treatment of human beings before and during the great conflict. Although the military casualties of the Second World War were actually less than those of World War I, the number of deaths among civilians was perhaps the greatest of any other armed conflict in the history of the world. Europe became the burial ground for over sixteen million individuals who were killed by the German Third Reich (Gilbert 824). The majority of these murders were the result of the perverse hatred and political ideology of Adolph Hitler and his Nazi followers. An explanation of how Hitler came to power, of his political and social ideology, and of his main purpose for the war, along with descriptions of methods of Nazi oppression, provides background for this study. Through this background, we can get a better grasp on the conditions children and young people had to endure as well as on the extraordinary courage it took for them to speak out.

Hitler's Rise to Power

After the First World War, Germany's economic and military destinies were controlled by its conquerors. A worldwide economic depression, as well as war reparations payments, a cap on Germany's military, and the division of lands, caused Germany to suffer with a debilitated economy and a wounded national pride (Wall 23-24). The extreme devaluation of their money along with the hostility aroused by being

excluded from controlling their own country encouraged many Germans to seek relief through the numerous and varied fledgling political parties that emerged during the 1920s and early 1930s (26-28).

In 1919, Adolph Hitler had joined a small political party, the German Workers Party (Wall 28). Rising to a position of power quickly, Hitler was able to help outline the political aims of the group, to adopt the swastika as the group's symbol, and to rename the group the National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP) (28). According to historian Donald D. Wall, "the familiar nickname 'Nazi'" was "formed by the first two letters of national...and the second syllable, zi, of the German *sozialistische* (socialist)" (28-29). The "Nazi" Party believed that large corporations, the impositions outlined in the Treaty of Versailles, foreigners, Communists, and Jews were responsible for Germany's economic struggles (28). Hitler encouraged interest in "his" party, which he controlled by 1921, by appealing to deep-seated feelings of nationalism within the German people (29).

Hitler, gifted with inspiring speaking and leadership abilities, was able to win favor for the Nazi platform even after a failed coup (Wall 28-31). The publication of his autobiography, *Mein Kampf*, in 1925 provided him with a forum to advance his ideas on anti-Semitism and on establishing a racially superior breed, the Germans (Aryans), to a greater number of people (36-37). Because of strategic and pervasive propaganda campaigns and strong-arm tactics by the SA (storm troopers for the party) (29) and the SS (originally Hitler's personal body guards but transformed into elite fighting units) (28), the NSDAP grew in membership and in popularity. After healthy showings in Reichstag elections of 1930 and 1932 (45, 55), Hitler was appointed Chancellor of

Germany on January 30, 1933 (61). In the early months of 1933, Hitler was able to establish himself as total dictator and the NSDAP as the only legal political party in Germany (65-68, Yahil 58). Until April of 1945, Hitler would be the supreme controller of the Greater German Reich.

Hitler's Ideology

Hitler's visions for world domination were fueled by his desire to preserve a pure strain of "super-humans." These individuals of Germanic or Nordic blood would develop a racially pure national community, a *Volksgemeinschaft* (Wall 88). The *Volksgemeinschaft* concept was appealing to Germans because of their history of strong nationalism. Members of the *Volksgemeinschaft* would eventually control all of Europe, creating an almost Utopian society of intelligent, strong, and gifted Aryans. Jews, Slavs, Gypsies, and other "aliens" were considered racially inferior and, thus, would be useful only as slave labor. The mentally and chronically ill, homosexuals, and social deviants (criminals, prostitutes, and work evaders) were also considered undesirable and had no place in the Third Reich (107).

Jews, in particular, were singled out by the Nazis as being responsible for Germany's greatest problems. Although most Germans were not ardent anti-Semites, Hitler and his Nazi propaganda machine were able to place the blame for economic and social "injustices" that existed within Germany on the Jewish community. Jews were accused of dominating commerce, causing Aryan businesses to suffer. Jews were also held responsible for the spread of Communism, encouraging Germans to fear and then to hate the Jews (Wall 55-57). By encouraging the *Volksgemeinschaft* to consider economic, social, and political issues, Hitler was able to cloak his racial ideas and to

implement laws and edicts that disenfranchised and eventually dehumanized most of the Jews in Europe.

In September of 1935, the Nazi Reich implemented the Nuremberg Laws (Gilbert 47). These laws made racial distinctions legal. Only those of "pure" German blood were given citizenship. All Jews were deemed not of German blood and, therefore, not citizens. The laws designated the legal status of different degrees of Jewish ancestry. The laws also prohibited German-Jewish marriages and premarital sex between Jews and Germans (Gilbert 47-48, Wall 108, Yahil 68, 71-72). After the Nuremberg Laws, other laws, taxes, and economic restrictions were levied against the Jewish community. Anti-Jewish "actions" increased in 1938. On June 9, 1938, the first Jewish synagogue was burned in Munich (Gilbert 63). Although no one was killed in the fire, thousands of Jews were arrested and interred at several concentration camps.

Another event that helped to make Nazi attitudes toward Jews unmistakably clear was a pogrom named *Kristallnacht* ("night of the broken glass") which took place on November 9-10, 1938 (Gilbert 70-71, Yahil 111). Through the night of November 9th, throughout Germany, SA and SS men "destroyed thousands of Jewish shops, burned all synagogues, killed nearly 200 Jews, and arrested 40,000, most of whom were subsequently deported to Poland" (Wall 109). Although many Jews had been emigrating from Germany since Hitler's rise to power, attempts to emigrate and suicides within the Jewish community dramatically increased after the events of *Kristallnacht*. At first content to allow Jews to leave the German Reich, Hitler and his loyal, high-ranking officers eventually decided that all Jews would need to be "removed" permanently in order to have racial purity.

The Purposes of War

In order for Hitler's *Volksgemeinschaft* to thrive, he needed land for them to live on and to work together. Although land acquisitions that he made before and during the war helped to increase his political and economic power, Hitler also desired Germanic lands for the expansion of his "master race" (Yahil 136). Germany and the lands surrounding it were considered to be the most favorable location for propagating the Aryan race. Slavic and Russian lands were, like the peoples who lived there, deemed inferior and would be suitable for housing inferior slave laborers. Though Hitler had been able to peaceably acquire the Rhineland and the Sudetenland, his invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, sparked a declaration of war from Britain and France (Gilbert 85). Throughout the war, Hitler pushed his troops to acquire more land for the Reich. As the Germans occupied different lands, they set about implementing anti-Jewish policies. In six years of war, Adolph Hitler and the Nazi military machine were able to "cleanse" Europe of over sixteen million people, including about six million Jews (824). Although Hitler was able to improve Germany's economy and to encourage German nationalism through the war, his primary goals for the war revolved around his racial ideas. Even in the last days of the war, in late 1944 and early 1945, when the Allied armies were advancing and re-claiming territory, Hitler did not diminish his efforts to wipe out the Jews and other undesirables until the threat of discovery or conquest became inescapable. The Second World War was, undeniably, a war against humanity.

Methods of Nazi Oppression

Although the Nazi political party had concerns for issues other than racial ones, most of the actions and edicts of the Nazi system were aimed at the eventual goal of

racial purity. The Nazis used a number of methods to oppress and overrun Jews and other target groups. Some of these methods included concentration camps, ghettos, mass deportations, and random killings. These different methods required a great deal of organization, time, and money from the Nazis in order to be effective. Hitler and his followers obviously had enough dedication and commitment to see their vision almost to complete fruition. The most widespread methods of Nazi oppression are described in more detail below.

Economic and Social Sanctions

In addition to the Nuremberg Laws, laws in Germany and eventually throughout German-occupied Europe were enacted to separate Jews from "normal" society and to remove their means of livelihood (Hilberg 1: 69-71, 86). Jewish businesses were ordered to be transferred to Aryan proprietors (Gilbert 50, Hilberg 1: 94). Jewish children were prohibited from attending German schools, and Jewish professionals (doctors, lawyers, etc.) were barred from dealing with non-Jews (Yahil 63-65). Jews in occupied areas were forced to wear some sort of identification marker (stars, armbands) and were required to carry specially issued identity cards (Hilberg 1: 216, Yahil 156). Jews were also required to follow a strict curfew throughout the war. Jews were forbidden entrance into some stores, public performance halls, and public gardens. During the war, in conjunction with the ghetto and concentration camp systems, the Nazis decided which Jews would work and which job they would hold. Most Jews suffered the complete suspension of their civil liberties.

Forced Labor

Jews and other persecuted peoples within the grasp of the Third Reich were often required to work at menial jobs under the direction of the Nazis. These jobs could be anywhere and entail any manner of work. Commonly, these jobs were particularly taxing physically and draining emotionally. Whether in the ghetto, in concentration camps, or out in the occupied countryside, Jews and others were forced to work. Jobs included manufacturing war materiel; building roads, bridges, and buildings; sorting clothing, shoes, and other seized items; and disposing of the dead. Jews and others were often forced to leave their families, loved ones, and homes to perform these menial tasks (Yahil 159).

Concentration Camps

A system of concentration camps was established over a number of years in the Third Reich. The first camp, Dachau, was established in March of 1933 to hold "critics of the regime" (Gilbert 32). From 1933 throughout 1942, concentration camps were set up in nearly every occupied territory. Some camps were just used as holding stations or forced labor camps, but other camps, such as Auschwitz-Birkenau, Chelmno, Treblinka, and Mauthausen, were designated as death camps. These death camps were outfitted with poison gas chambers to expeditiously exterminate hundreds of victims at one time. Crematoria and pits were used to burn the remains of most of the victims (Yahil 133-135, 366). SS units commonly ran these camps with the aid of machine guns, electrified fences, and *kapos*, ruthless prisoners (often former criminals) in charge of particular groups of fellow inmates (Yahil 370, *Inside* 55). Most of the victims of the Nazis were killed inside concentration camps.

Mass Deportations

In order for areas to be purged of undesirables and for the Aryans to have room to expand, the Nazis required Jews and other groups to relocate *en masse* to different geographic areas (Yahil 105, 136). These areas may have been concentration camps, ghettos, or different countries in the cases of forced emigration. The deportations served several functions. First, more land was freed up for use by the German Reich by removing its former occupants. Second, Jews and other groups were denied the freedom to live where they wanted to, thus increasing the German influence on their personal lives. Third, and most significantly, the Nazis were able to concentrate large groups of people in certain areas to make them easier to control and, ultimately, easier to eliminate.

Ghettos

In several German-controlled lands, especially in Poland, ghettos were established within cities to house Jews. All Jews were required to live in a certain section of the city designated by the Nazis as the ghetto. The Nazis often picked a section of the city on the outskirts that was particularly poor or dirty (Gilbert 124). Also, the section designated was often too small to hold all of the occupants (Yahil 169). Ghettos were supposed to be under the direct control of Jewish councils, although they often ended up being manipulated by the Nazis (Wall 201). Industries for the war effort were located within most ghettos, providing jobs for the occupants. Ghettos were fairly self-sufficient, containing their own stores, hospitals, and police. Families were allowed to live together, but, because of the severe overcrowding in many ghettos, people often lived up to twelve or fifteen to a room (Gilbert 140). Disease and epidemics flourished in such overcrowding, and thousands died yearly. The ghetto-dwellers were also subject to

random roundups, where SS men would enter the ghetto and "select" large numbers of people for forced labor, extermination, or deportation. The Nazis made ghetto-living even more unpleasant by limiting food, medical, and heating supplies. The ghettos were the sites of many instances of Nazi brutality (Hilberg 1: 215-239, 266-269).

Mass Murder

The Nazis implemented several methods to murder millions of people. The poison gas chambers of the death camps are perhaps the most widely known method. Several hundred victims would be held in a sealed area and inundated with either carbon monoxide or a gas produced by acid crystals. Considered to be the most efficient method of murder, this "special treatment" could dispose of several thousand people a day. Another method to rid the Reich of Jews and others was mass shootings. Especially popular among *Einsatzgruppen* (special units of the SS) in Eastern Europe and Western Russian provinces, victims "were herded into the countryside, forced to undress and dig their own mass graves, and then shot to death" (Wall 203). Several reports of survivors relate hundreds left wounded and buried alive, forced to suffocate under other bodies and mounds of soil (Gilbert 204). Other methods of mass murder were used in connection with already established means of oppression. Millions died of overwork, little or no food or water, disease, or extremely harsh conditions. Most concentration camp detainees were transported in trucks or railroad cars. During transportation, thousands of detainees were deliberately killed by inadequate ventilation, lack of water, or harsh weather condition (extreme heat or cold). Also, thousands of mentally defective and terminally ill patients from both state and private hospitals were killed by shootings and by poison gas.

Starvation

Starvation was a method of torture that the Nazis implemented in order to subdue, weaken, and overcome their victims. Because of the isolation Jews suffered during Nazi control, they had a hard time organizing any effective resistance. This inability to organize was aggravated by the extreme hunger most victims suffered. Most of the victims were too concerned with getting enough food for themselves and their families to devote time or energy to resistance movements. Also, starvation saved the Nazis from actually having to gas or shoot their victims themselves. Thousands, possibly millions, died in ghettos and concentration camps from the lack of sufficient nutrition (*Inside* 14-18, Hilberg 1: 149-154). Paradoxically, many survivors died after different concentration camps were liberated from the rich foods that their liberators provided them with. After years of Nazi deprivation, their systems could not digest the fats in butter, milk, meats, and chocolate, leaving the Nazis with one last means to inflict torture and oppression.

Deception

The Nazis used the power of deception to control their captives. Rumors about loved ones, labor camps, and Nazi severity kept the Jews and others in a constant state of uncertainty. The Nazis used every opportunity to lie to their victims. For example, the Nazis would tell the ghetto-dwellers that so many people were needed for jobs in another area. Adequate food, clothing, and housing was promised, and often families were told that they would be kept together. These "facts" enticed many to volunteer for "resettlement." Most of the time, the volunteers were transported to different death camps and gassed upon arrival. The Nazis also either forced deportees to write postcards to other family members or produced such cards themselves. The postcards would

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appear a week or two after a "selection," supposedly from a deported family member or friend. These cards told of the excellent work and conditions that the deportee had encountered. Often, these cards were complete lies, but they helped to encourage other "laborers" to volunteer during subsequent selections. Also, the Nazis took great pains to keep up the ruse of promised work whenever transports arrived at the death camps. Victims were told that they would be given jobs after they had received showers and/or "disinfection." These showers or inhalation rooms (for disinfection) were actually the gas chambers, but the deception enabled the SS men on duty to herd large numbers to their deaths in relative calm.

Random Killings

No Jew or prisoner could ever be assured of his or her life. Random shootings and beatings claimed the lives of many. People were shot in the streets of the ghetto, during transports and/or roundups, and for minor infractions against Nazi rules. Anyone who appeared suspicious, who smuggled items, or who reacted defiantly would often be beaten by SS men and finally finished off with a shot to the head. Victims were thrown from upper story windows, shot because they moved too quickly or too slowly, and abused because of their age, gender, or state of health. Reports of SS men beating victims to death by blows from their hands, guns, pipes, rubber truncheons, and steel-toed boots abound. The randomness of the killings – the fact that the victim usually had not committed any obvious crime deserving death – encouraged a feeling of helplessness in the Jews and other groups because they never knew who would be next or what "crime" would be punishable by death.

Medical Experiments

Many Jews and non-combatants lost their lives during the course of medical experiments that were performed on them during detention in concentration camps. Dr. Josef Mengele of Auschwitz is probably the best-known figure in medical brutality in the camp system. His experiments on twins could be especially painful and gruesome. However, other physicians and scientists conducted experiments in sterilization and anatomical study. Skeletons of Jews were provided to medical researchers from victims in the camps. Other research was conducted on the effects of extreme conditions and inadequate provisions during hard labor, thus giving the Nazis' main methods of oppression and murder scientific justification (Yahil 368-369, *Inside* 85-94, Hilberg 3: 936-947).

Death Marches

Toward the end of the war, when the Nazis realized that their system of extermination would soon be discovered, they forced whole concentration camp populations to march to different locations further in the German Reich (Yahil 526). These prisoners, who were already weakened by disease, extreme hunger, and inadequate clothing and shelter, were often kept without food or water during the marches. Thousands died on these marches of starvation and/or exhaustion. Those who fell or stumbled were either shot or left to die. Although some were able to escape, most who attempted to escape were shot or hunted down and killed during the attempt. Often on arrival at the new camp, those who had not died on the way were gassed (Hilberg 3: 982-985).

Conclusion

These methods of murder and oppression, along with Nazi thoughts on racial purity, created an atmosphere throughout Europe during the Second World War that allowed hate to abound and the systematic extermination of sixteen million people to appear rational in the eyes of the perpetrators. With the end of the war, and the revelation of the extent of Nazi brutality, the world could see the damage that had been inflicted on not just the Jews or target groups or even Europe, but on the world as a whole.

Also, in light of such violent words and deeds, we can develop a better, though still incomplete, understanding of what the daily lives of millions of children and young people must have been like. Nazi domination of Europe was the direct antithesis of what children, as well as adults, had been used to. Rather than existing peacably in communities with people of all ethnic origins and beliefs, the Jews were systematically segregated, isolated, and annihilated. The actual occurrences are hard enough for an adult mind to even acknowledge; how did the children react? What were they thinking about this man with a little mustache and a loud voice? What did they think of the men who carried guns, of the cramped ghettos, of the train rides to the camps? Since we cannot directly ask most of those who experienced Hitler and his plans, we have to rely on personal diaries and creative works to provide us with a glimpse of World War II Europe through the eyes of children.

Part II - "God give that this shame may soon cease":

A Picture of WWII Youth Through Their Personal Diaries

Part of what makes the Holocaust so hard to understand is the brutality and thoroughness with which the Nazis carried out their plans for mass destruction of the Jewish race in Europe. Among the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust, some one to one and a half million were children (between the ages of zero and eighteen) (Eisen 4). According to George Eisen, the Nazis especially served death and destruction to the youngest of the race in order to remove the "root" of Jewry from Europe (13). Most of the young people affected by Nazi oppression showed little comprehension of the Nazis' plans and little resistance to their destruction. However, several young people refused to comply quietly with Hitler's aims and resisted his attempts at early death in a variety of ways.

The personal diary is one of the best records that later generations can use to learn about the resistance by and the personal beliefs and attitudes of youth. Psychotherapist Laurel Holliday believes that the diaries of young people during the war and the Holocaust served several important functions. Holliday notes that, as well as serving as an outlet for "anger and rage," the diaries provided the children with "a way of finding meaning and purpose in the chaos with which they were surrounded" (xvii). Holliday also points out that "the diaries gave the children the sense that they, as young as they might have been, had a right to express themselves about what was happening in their world" (xvii). Although official Nazi policy required that anyone caught keeping a personal account of the war would be shot, many young people defied their aggressors

and wrote powerful and moving descriptions of their daily lives, their dreams, their political feelings, and their personal struggles (xvii-xviii).

Although Jewish children bore the brunt of Nazi aggression and hatred, some Gentile young people also kept accounts of life under Nazi brutality. Even though each child's experience was unique, several common themes or shared subject matters run through most of the diaries of young people during the war and Holocaust. Themes such as personal views of and reactions to the Nazi regime, thoughts about and beliefs in God, and the desire for resistance were subjects that most of the youth of the time devoted thought and space to in their diaries.

Personal Views of and Reactions to the Nazi Regime

The act of writing can help many people discover their true feelings and can help them figure out their opinions and beliefs. Writing can also help people find an avenue for recourse to correct things they believe to be wrong or unfair. Holliday notes that diary writing for young people during World War II and the Holocaust provided the writers with a venue for describing life under the Nazis as well as for expressing their disgust or anger at the changes in their lives (xvii). Holliday writes: "In this secret place, they could release the explosive anger they felt without upsetting and endangering their families" (xvi). Holliday also, as already mentioned, notes the importance of diary writing in helping young people sort out "meaning and purpose" in their lives when all noticeable normality was removed (xvi).

Many young people mentioned particular Nazi edicts and laws in their diaries, and most noted incidents of Nazi terror and brutality. Since Jewish children were the victims of most of the edicts and acts of violence, it is unsurprising that they mention

such occurrences in their diaries. Also, some just note the changes in the laws or treatment, while others relate their reactions to the changes and their experiences born out of those changes.

In the pages of their works, many young Jewish diarists noted the decree that required that Jews wear some form of identification on their outer garments. A fourteen year-old Lithuanian Jewess Macha Rolnikas recorded the issuance of the decree requiring all Jews to wear a white patch with a yellow "J" on it. Rolnikas questioned the reason for the Nazi decree, speculating that by making all Jews wear a common identification, the Nazis "no longer regard us as human beings and brand us just like cattle" (187). Yitshok Rudashevski, also a fourteen year-old Lithuanian Jew, made note of a similar decree, which required Jews to wear a badge on the front and back of their clothing. Rudashevski also recorded his feelings about the decree. On July 8, 1941, he wrote: " . . . for a long time I could not put on the badge. I felt a lump, as though I had two frogs on me. I was ashamed to appear in them on the street not because of what [they were] doing to us. I was ashamed of our helplessness" (144). It is understandable that most teenagers would have a strong reaction to such an edict. At the time of age when most young people want to blend into the community, requiring them to wear an outward identity marker caused feelings of isolation and impotence. However, many Jews came to regard the badges as a symbol of honor. Rudashevski himself decided to change his attitude toward the badges, instead thrusting the shame and guilt of their appearance onto the Germans (144).

Another diarist, thirteen year-old Eva Heyman of Hungary, made mention of other Nazi edicts besides the one requiring badges to be worn by Jews (104). Heyman

notes the existence of the Nuremberg Laws "that Hitler probably invented" (104) as well as radio announcements about restrictions placed on Jews (101). When Heyman moved into the Jewish ghetto in her hometown, she noted with some apprehension that " . . . on every house, they've posted a notice which tells exactly what we're not allowed to do" (117). This notice, issued by the commander to the ghetto-camp, forbade just about everything, according to Heyman. However, her fear arose when she noticed that the punishment for offenses was death (117). Although Heyman tried to qualify her fear by noting that "it doesn't actually say that this punishment also applies to children," she admits that children probably are punished to the full extent of the law (118).

Other young diarists recorded incidents of physical violence performed by their German aggressors. Werner Galik, a twelve year-old German Jew who wrote his experiences down after the war, saw that people trying to smuggle food into the ghetto where he lived were "either shot, placed in confinement or punished with blows" (57). Jerzy Feliks Urman (Jerzyk), an eleven year-old Ukrainian Jew who committed suicide rather than be imprisoned by the Nazis, was heavily influenced by the violence he saw. At one point in his young life, he saw a German officer gouge out a child's eyes with a hot wire for the offense of smuggling food into the ghetto (*Grown-Up* 5). Translator and editor Anthony Rudolf believes that "without any shadow of doubt this terrible episode in the life of an unknown child...contributed decisively to the manner of Jerzyk's own death" (5). Unfortunately, such acts of violence were almost commonplace in war-torn Europe, and it is remarkable that more young people decided to live in the face of such destruction.

Thoughts About and Beliefs in God

Another shared subject that runs through several youth diaries from World War II and the Holocaust is thoughts about and beliefs in God. Although many of the young Jewish writers had not been brought up in the synagogue or with any particular Jewish religious teachings, several devoted passages in their diaries to their reflections and musings on God and His purposes. The title for this part of this paper, "'God give that this shame may soon cease': A Picture of WWII Youth Through Their Personal Diaries," comes from the diary of fourteen year-old Dawid Rubinowicz. His entry of February 12, 1942, contains the statement: "God give that this shame may soon cease" (83).

Other young diarists addressed remarks and prayers to God within the pages of their diaries. Seventeen year-old Sarah Fishkin wrote on October 26, 1941: "May the one G-d preserve us from such harm and may He bring death to the attackers who quell their wild feelings with the blood of thousands of human beings" (341). Modern readers may find it surprising and even offensive that Fishkin asks for protection and retribution. However, given the Jewish people's overall sense of helplessness, many Jews felt that their only source for defense was God.

Other young people felt a conflict between what they had been taught and what their actual inclinations were. The Catholic Janine Phillips, on October 25, 1939, wrote in her diary that she had asked her priest "if it were a sin to be nasty to the Gerries" (15). Once her priest answered that "God probably would be prepared to give us some sort of dispensation" for not liking their foreign aggressors, Phillips wonders about the next step - actually killing a German (15). When Father Jakob says that murder is not permissible, Phillips writes, "I hope God will remember to give the Gerries three bad marks" (16).

One can only imagine the inward struggle that children such as Phillips had to wrestle with in balancing their beliefs and their reality.

While some young people completely lost their belief in God because of the horror and tragedy they witnessed around them, others found their faith renewed. Two young diarists in particular noted their reassurance that God had not forgotten them and that God would "resurrect" the nation of Israel.

Janina Heshele wrestled with losing hope and with suffering apathy toward life. However, toward the end of her diary, she wrote: "I felt a deep intuition that, despite it all, God is still with us. He sees how we give Him thanks for living, in spite of the horrors around us. I believe that ultimately He would not let the few remnants of Israel be wiped out . . . I was persuaded that faith in God bears with it the hope to live" (72). Even though the suffering and death she witnessed with her own eyes did not reaffirm the experience of life, Heshele's hope and trust in God allowed her to look toward the future.

Anne Frank also devoted space in her diary to her beliefs about the nearness and purposes of God. Though Frank's religious beliefs are often overlooked in her famous diary, a closer examination reveals that Frank had thoughts and feelings about God that were similar to those of other young diarists of the time. On March 31, 1944, she noted in her diary that "God has not forsaken me, and He never will" (246). Frank dedicated several other passages to her thoughts about God, often equating God's presence with the realities of nature. Frank also believed that God would see to the preservation of His people. On April 11, 1944, she wrote:

> Who has inflicted this on us? Who has set us apart from all the rest? Who has put us through such suffering? It's God who has made us the way we

> are, but it's also God who will lift us up again. In the eyes of the world, we're doomed, but if, after all of this suffering, there are still Jews left, the Jewish people will be held up as an example. (261)

Frank, along with several other young diarists of the time, believed that God remembered the Jews and had plans for their future that would be revealed at a point in the future.

The Desire for Resistance

Perhaps the universal thread that runs through nearly all of the diaries that have survived from World War II and the Holocaust is the desire for resistance. Resistance could take a variety of forms and was implemented by both Jews and Gentiles alike. Along with specific acts of resistance, young people recorded their desires to fight, to survive, and to make plans for the future.

Twelve year-old Janina Heshele said she understood why there was so little resistance from the Jews since she, too, "lost the desire to exist" and felt "a deep disgust for living" (71). Most of the other young people who kept diaries instead felt a strong determination to resist Nazi domination. Janine Phillips, a ten year-old Catholic in Poland, recorded the time her friend Wojtek made a snowman parody of Adolph Hitler. After she and her friends were advised to destroy the snowman, Phillips and her friends, armed with "sticks and bottles," demolished "Hitler" and declared victory over their oppressor by standing at attention and singing the Polish national anthem (19).

Another young person who took a stand against tyranny was Eva Heyman. On the day when the police came to confiscate her bicycle, Heyman resisted their attempts passionately. On April 7, 1944, she wrote: "I threw myself on the ground, held on to the

back wheel of my bicycle, and shouted all sorts of things at the policemen: 'Shame on you for taking away a bicycle from a girl! That's robbery!'" (106). Although Heyman did lose her bicycle, she did not allow the Nazi regime to take advantage of her without some form of protest.

A twelve year-old Gentile Dutch boy also recorded a passionate outburst in his diary. The boy had been told by his uncle that his mother had been killed in an air raid. After learning the news, the boy wrote that he "tried to run away . . . I tried to get out in the streets to fight the Germans. I don't know what all I did. I was crazy" (Van der Heide 39-40). Such a reaction is understandable when someone is so young and has just lost a parent. This Dutch boy expressed a desire to fight that was similar to many of his cohort generation members during the war. Although most young people did not actively take up arms, they expressed the desire to fight in their writings.

Another form of resistance that nearly all young diarists participated in was the desire to survive. Survival would prove to the Nazis that their schemes had been thwarted and that their plans had failed. Although many experienced fatigue and entertained the wish to be rid of the suffering, most of the diaries of young people mention the great desire and determination to outlast their oppressors. Even when all hope for improvement was gone, the will to survive continued. Seventeen year-old Sarah Fishkin wrote in 1941 that "we seem to have reached the end of everything. But one wants to live. One craves more of youth and joy" (339). Another diarist Macha Rolnikas noted that her desire to live was great. She also mentioned that those who had died before her had not wanted to die either (192). Rolnikas may have been concerned about her ability to survive, but she was able to endure and survive the war.

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While some may have been ambivalent about surviving or may have been afraid of its likelihood, others wrote passionately about their will to survive. A fifteen year-old American girl detained in the Warsaw ghetto during the war noted the strength of character and perseverance that was necessary for anyone to survive. Even though the inhabitants of the ghetto experienced terrible hardships and inhuman conditions, this girl was impressed by the fortitude of the inhabitants. On September 23, 1941, she wrote: "The Germans are surprised that the Jews in the ghetto do not commit mass suicide . . . We, too, are surprised that we have managed to endure all these torments. This is the miracle of the ghetto" (Berg 229). Later on, on the same date, this young American noted that the main weapon the people in the ghetto had was laughter - "our people laugh at death and at the Nazi decrees" (231). Finding humor in adversity, according to this diarist, was a secret weapon in the Jewish arsenal for survival.

Eva Heyman expressed a strong desire to survive in her diary. On May 30, 1944, Heyman wrote with much passion about her desire to live. She even was willing to do whatever was necessary to secure her survival. She wrote:

> . . . I don't want to die; I want to live even if it means that I'll be the only person here allowed to stay. I would wait for the end of the war in some cellar, or on the roof, or in some secret cranny. I would even let the cross-eyed gendarme, the one who took our flour away from us, kiss me, just as long as they don't kill me, only that they should let me live. (125)

Many young people shared Heyman's passion for living, but, unfortunately, many also shared her fate. Heyman was sent to Auschwitz and was personally selected for the gas

chambers by Dr. Josef Mengele (Boas 151-152). Obviously, the desire to survive was a strong one in Hitler's young victims.

Perhaps the greatest form of resistance that young people performed was their determination to plan for the future. Since the Nazis were working to ensure that most of these young people would not live, their plans and dreams for the future re-affirmed to the Nazis that Jewish youth would not give up their lives easily. Nearly all surviving diaries of Jewish youth contain some mention of future plans or aspirations. Since both diary-writing and planning for the future are characteristics that are typical of youth, the fact that these two activities have been united in the diaries of Jewish youths during the Holocaust re-establishes their vitality and normalcy.

Werner Galik of Germany had simple plans for after the war. He wrote that he would "like to have my parents, and would like to live again like we lived before with my parents" (65). Even though Galik survived, his parents did not. Anne Frank's plans for life after the war were much more elaborate. Besides wanting to "achieve more than Mother ever did" (262), Frank wanted to become a journalist (249). She was convinced of her ability to write and wanted to pursue that career after the liberation of Holland (249). Along with wanting to become a Dutch citizen (262) and to travel abroad for a year to learn languages (286), Frank expressed the desire to earn a place in the future by making significant contributions to future societies. On April 5, 1944, she wrote: "I want to be useful or bring enjoyment to all people, even those I've never met. I want to go on living even after my death!" (250). Although Frank herself did not survive the war, her diary has become part of the canon of Holocaust literature and her name, as well as her spirit, has continued to live.

Charlotte Veresova, a fourteen year-old Czech who survived Terezin concentration camp, also expressed the desire to have her name win a place in eternity. Through her experiences in Terezin, Veresova came to appreciate the ordinary, everyday activities that she had been forbidden to engage in. She also contemplated suicide, musing that she would end her life if it meant the end of the war (204). Veresova wrote that she "would like to perform some great deed, so that my name would not die out" (204). She was unable to perform such a deed, but Veresova was able to survive the war and instead make her mark on the world by living.

Other Jewish youths were encouraged by and convinced of the hardiness of the young to survive and to change the future. Yitshok Rudashevski, who was active in the Vilna ghetto's learning and artistic circles, wrote, on his fifteenth birthday, that he was living "confident in the future. I am not conflicted about it, and see before me sun and sun and sun" (173). Rudashevski may have developed some of this enthusiasm from his contact with other youth in various learning circles. In December of 1942 after a club (learning circle) holiday, Rudashevski wrote a particularly hopeful and inspiring entry about youth. Encouraged by the freedom the group experienced while singing and visiting, he wrote that "we have proved that from the ghetto there will not emerge a youth broken in spirit; from the ghetto there will emerge a strong youth which is hardy and cheerful" (173-174). Although Rudashevski did not survive the war, his predictions about the youth which emerged after the war were accurate.

Another youth who was convinced of the hardiness of the Jewish race was Tamarah Lazerson, a fourteen year-old Lithuanian Jew. Lazerson was enthusiastic about the future of her people when she wrote in 1942 that "we are a remarkable people,

indestructible. No decrees or edicts will break us. I declare this people will never be destroyed, despite their unspeakable suffering" (128). Although Lazerson was not always able to maintain her strong resolve during the war, her thoughts about the eternalness of the Jewish race are a direct contrast to the Nazi aims of total annihilation. Hopes and plans for the future were an incredible alternative to Hitler's "final solution."

Conclusion

Although every young person's experiences were unique during World War II and the Holocaust, some obvious themes in their diaries included their own ideas about Nazi oppression and about God and their desires for some form of resistance. These themes were developed through their writing in a time when normal life had ceased to exist. Since diary writing was a way for many of these young people to come to terms with the new reality, the function of the diary in war-torn society was necessary and important. Psychotherapist Holliday, in her reflections on the purpose of diary writing of war-torn youth, believes that "the diary writing helped preserve a core sense of personal identity and integrity even for those whose names were replaced with numbers and who had dog tags hung around their necks" (xix).

In other words, even though the Nazi power system tried to reduce all of European Jewry to nothingness, individual voices were able to survive and endure. The obvious aim of Nazi ideology was to remove the humanity of an entire race of people. However, the young people who wrote diaries and personal accounts during World War II and the Holocaust defied this aim and, instead, re-enforced the resilience of their people. Through their written accounts of Nazi atrocities, individual voices convey a level of humanity and compassion to an otherwise incomprehensible horror of the

Holocaust. While such records may not help us understand the reasons why the Nazis did what they did, they do help us understand how some were able to persevere.

Part III - Artistic Resistance: The Indirect Insurrection of Jewish Youth Through Art

Throughout World War II and the Holocaust, young people were confronted with extreme conditions and little hope. Most youths were unable to express themselves in a tangible, creative way because of the situations in which they found themselves. However, some Jewish youths were able to sort out meaning for life and for different experiences by writing out their frustrations, hopes, and dreams in personal diaries and narratives. Some children were even able to construct elaborate short stories and imaginative literary works. Others, because of inadequate time, materials, or vocabulary, found other means to express themselves. Stories, poems, and artistic works became means for children to express themselves and to relieve the tension associated with their precarious lifestyles.

Creative works from Jewish children during World War II and the Holocaust were certainly the exception and not the rule. However, subsequent generations can learn a great deal about the individual concerns and experiences that went into making the Holocaust a significant event in world history by considering the content and conditions of the surviving creative works by children. Since most of the young artists perished, the few, surviving creative pieces tell a great deal about the reactions and experiences of young Jewish people during Hitler's reign in Europe.

According to some estimates, as many as one and to one and one-half million children under the age of fifteen perished during the Holocaust (Eisen 4). From one ghetto alone, the transit/model camp of Theresienstadt, only about 100 children survived out of the 15,000 who passed through its gates in a four year period of operation, with

none of the survivors being under the age of fourteen (*butterfly* xxi). The Nazi regime placed special emphasis on eradicating Jewish youth because their goal was to completely remove the Jewish race from Europe. Removing children from the Jewish culture was supposed to ensure that Jewish culture would cease to exist because no one would exist to see to its perpetuity. The Nazis were especially brutal in their treatment of children by imposing harsh social restrictions on them in occupied communities and ghettos and by eliminating them quickly in concentration camps. The only hope a child had of surviving internment in a death camp was appearing to be at least fifteen years of age. That magical age meant that a child could productively work in various camp industries.

With the pressures of working, surviving, and sometimes taking care of family members, many young people were not able to find time to record their experiences in diaries or to create imaginative works of literature or art. Therefore, those who were able to devote any amount of time to creative pursuits were exceptional. That is not to say that those who did not have the luxury of creative endeavors were unexceptional or unmotivated. With stringent work assignments, inadequate food, scarce materials for writing and creating, and insufficient clothing and shelter, the pressure of existence took most of the young people's time and energy. A few children here and there throughout Europe, however, were able to find time, materials, and creativity in the grips of Nazi horror and were able to produce new and imaginative works of artistic expression. The persistence of these children to maintain their originality and creativity under such harsh conditions reinforced the hardiness and tenacity of the Jewish race in Europe.

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Creative works by Jewish youth during the Holocaust took a variety of forms. Youths who were of a literary bent and who had time to devote to writing developed short stories. Children in various ghettos and camps, especially Theresienstadt, were given enough freedom to devise poetry and to create drawings, paintings, and collages. These kinds of creative works all helped Jewish youth re-affirm their place in the world and express their desires for change and for survival.

Short Stories

Although most children during World War II and the Holocaust were not able to devote the time necessary to developing elaborate short stories, some were able to produce longer works of fiction. Often, those children who were in hiding had more time available for such extensive creation than did children living in ghettos or concentration camps. One young person in particular who was able to indulge a love for literature as well as an urge to create was Anne Frank. Since Frank and her family were in hiding in Amsterdam for over two years, she was able to devote a great deal of time to her creative writing. Also, because of the location of her hiding place (within an office building), Frank had a ready supply of writing material at her disposal, so she did not have to work especially hard for supplies or for time to study and to write.

Many of Frank's short stories reflect her extreme love of and belief in the power of nature. In "Eve's Dream," written in October of 1943, Frank writes about an elf who uses natural illustrations to reveal the differences in human personalities to a young girl named Eve. In another story, "The Flower Girl" written in 1944, Frank elaborates on her natural philosophy more. In the story, twelve year-old Krista must work hard selling flowers in the marketplace. Every night, even though she is very tired, Krista must gather

more flowers from the meadow to sell the next day. However, Krista does not get tired or disgruntled with her life because every day, for a few minutes, she is able to lie alone in the meadow and contemplate the vastness of God. According to Frank, "the little girl dreams and thinks only of the bliss of having, each day, this short while alone with God and nature" ("Flower" 33). Young Krista is an example of how Frank herself would like to encounter nature. Several passages in Frank's diary are devoted to the importance and the healing power of nature.

Another of Frank's short stories, "Fear" created in 1944, reinforces her stand on the healing virtues of nature. In the tale written from a post-war perspective, the first person narrator relates the extreme fear that she used to experience during air raids. However, one night during a particularly brutal raid, the young narrator escapes from the burning city into the quiet countryside. After spending a relaxing night under a calm heavens, the narrator discovers that her fear has gone. The narrator remarks that, after the war, she discovered that "fear is a sickness for which there is only one remedy. Anyone who is as afraid as I was then should look at nature and see that God is much closer than most people think" (39). This statement echoes several statements from Frank's diary which illustrate her ideas on the relationship between the nearness of God and the calming effects of nature.

A different story by Frank that expands on the calming effects of nature is "Jackie." This story is about a woman named Jackie who is suffering from a severe depression because her husband or lover, Paul, has left her. However, as Jackie spends time breathing in fresh air in front of an open window, she begins to emotionally heal and re-group. At the end of the story, Frank writes: "Anyone who looks at nature . . . long

enough and deeply enough, will, like Jackie, be cured of all despair" (64). This story, along with several others by the young diarist, helps modern readers understand the special relationship that Frank believed existed between nature and healing and wholeness. In one of her diary entries for July 15, 1944, Frank wrote that, even in the midst of almost certain destruction, "when I look up at the sky, I somehow feel that everything will change for the better, that this cruelty too shall end, that peace and tranquility will return once more" (*Diary* 332). For Frank, freedom and nature were eternally joined.

Poetry

Children in the ghetto/camp of Theresienstadt were better treated and had more creative freedoms than children in other Nazi-controlled environments. Young people who were housed in the children's dormitories of Theresienstadt received instruction in art and literature and were able to participate in "poetry contests, recitations, and cultural programs" (*butterfly* vii). Since Theresienstadt was designed to be a "model" camp for the approval of the International Red Cross, many European Jewish intellectuals were interred there for a time and were allowed to pass on their knowledge and skills to the children lodged in the camp. According to Chaim Potok, for the intellectuals and artists in Theresienstadt, "culture was a collective means of resisting the deceptions practiced by the Nazis as well as a weapon against despair" (xviii). Unfortunately, the majority of the citizens of the Theresienstadt ghetto were transported East to Auschwitz and other death camps, where they lost the struggle to survive (xxi).

Quite a few examples of children's poetry composed in Theresienstadt have survived to show subsequent generations the thoughts, reactions, and desires of Jewish

youth during the Holocaust. Many of the works express the desire to return home that many of the children experienced. One poem, "At Terezin" (which is another name for the Theresienstadt complex), attributed to a boy identified as Teddy, records the typical reactions that most young newcomers had upon arriving at the camp. Reviling sleeping on the dirt floor and at eating rotten food, a "new child" responds disgustedly to the pathetic conditions of life in the camp. The last two lines of the poem express the thoughts of many children: "Here in Terezin, life is hell / And when I'll go home again, I can't yet tell" (3). Another poem, "Home," was written by Franta Bass, a young teenager who died in Auschwitz at the age of fourteen. In his poem, Bass writes that he looks toward "the southeast, / I look, I look toward my home" (10). At the end of the short piece, Bass comments that he would happily go back to the city from which he has been taken (11). This poem by Bass, as well as others by children at Theresienstadt, relates the deep feelings many young people had about the concept of home.

However, several poems produced by young inmates of the ghetto/camp have a more positive, futuristic outlook. "It All Depends on How You Look at It" by Miroslav Kosek remarks on the beauty that this twelve to fourteen year-old noted within the camp. According to Kosek, "Death, after all, claims everyone," which means that a certain equity is extended to all, even to those who suffer (13). Unfortunately, Kosek was not afforded special privileges and died at the age of fourteen in Auschwitz. In another poem, "Fear," twelve year-old Eva Pickova discusses the fear that grips both parents and children during an outbreak of typhus. Pickova speculates on which is better, to live and witness suffering or to die? Pickova responds strongly in the last stanza of the poem with "No, no, my God, we want to live!" (55). She closes the poem by expressing the Jewish

youths' wish to improve their world and to endure. Another poem that expresses similar desires for survival was attributed to the children of Barracks L318 and L417, who were between the ages of ten and sixteen. "On a Sunny Evening" colorfully describes a glorious early evening in either the spring or summer time. Throughout the ghetto/camp, striking scenes of nature captivate the young authors and fill them with hope. The last two lines of this particular poem summarize the attitudes of many imprisoned young people: "If in barbed wire, things can bloom / Why couldn't I? I will not die!" (77). Dishearteningly, it is fairly certain that Auschwitz claimed most of the contributors to this piece.

Some poems produced by children in Theresienstadt were downright defiant in tone. Several young people felt the need to vehemently declare the strength and eternalness of the Jewish people. Two particular pieces decidedly declare the tenacity and secured triumph of the Jewish race. "The Storm" by Jirka Polak, who was interred at Theresienstadt at the age of seventeen, expresses his thoughts on the future of the Jews. In the first two stanzas of the poem, Polak comments on the weakness, wounds, and oppression the Jews have had to endure in the hands of the Nazis. However, in the last stanza, Polak's tone changes, affirming that the Jewish people will rise up again and will "stand in victory" over their oppressors (78). Miraculously, Polak was one of the estimated 100 who survived after internment at Theresienstadt.

Another poem by Franta Bass called "I am a Jew" follows a similar theme.

I am a Jew and will be a Jew forever.

Even if I should die from hunger,

never will I submit.

I will always fight for my people,

on my honor.

I will never be ashamed of them,

I give my word.

I am proud of my people,

how dignified they are.

Even though I am suppressed,

I will always come back to life. (57)

Although Bass was not able to survive the war, his feelings and convictions echo those felt by other members of his oppressed generation.

Art Works

As mentioned earlier, children in Theresienstadt were able to receive instruction in art, sometimes from noted Jewish artists (*butterfly* xix). Different levels of classes were designed, and children progressed from learning drawing fundamentals to more advanced still-lifes (84). Many times, young art students were forced to work with poor materials, often drawing on and making collages out of German office forms. Although many light-hearted, typical youth drawings, paintings, and collages have survived the war, several pieces have endured that are more representative of the darkness and despair that many children in the ghettos and camps experienced. Although the media of the works and the ages and sexes of the artists vary, several particular works eloquently express the horror and hopelessness that young people witnessed daily.

Collages

Three collages that share the theme of isolation and despair were produced in Theresienstadt from 1942 to 1945. *Flowers in a Vase* by Kitty Marketa Passerova is a collage of cut paper. A white vase stands on a brown block or table and holds eight colorful flowers. Behind the vase and table are four vertical blocks of color - light brown, red, black, and dark blue-green. One cannot know if Passerova is making a parallel between the eight flowers in the vase and the eight-pronged menorrah to represent the Jewish nation. Seven of the flowers are made of bright, vibrant colors and are constructed so that the blooms are wide open and appear to be pointing upward. However, one flower, which appears to be a tulip, is made of dark blue paper and is set apart from the other flowers on the extreme left of the vase. The bloom of this flower is pointing downward and is positioned on the green stem to give it the appearance of being broken. Although we do not know Passerova's thoughts or feelings during the creation of this piece, it is possible to interpret the one, downcast tulip as a representation of the despair and isolation that Passerova felt was present in some persecuted Jews.

Another collage *View of Terezin* was created by Hanus Weinberg, a resident of boy's dormitory II in Theresienstadt. This cut paper collage is a landscape with the ghetto/camp/village of Theresienstadt located near the center of the composition. The buildings are squarish blocks of light-colored paper topped by red triangle roofs. The ghetto is surrounded by green fields, a couple of trees, a lake, and a blue sky. However, Weinberg has disrupted this otherwise pastoral scene by two roads. One of the roads runs into the center of the ghetto before it comes to a pointed end. The other road crosses the first road outside of the ghetto and then runs below the ghetto to the right edge of the

piece. These two roads look like they make up a pair of giant scissors, which is cutting off Theresienstadt from the vibrant green world that exists outside of its borders. Whether or not Weinburg consciously designed the road to create isolation for the camp, the emotions inspired by the piece overwhelmingly invoke loneliness and removal.

A third collage *Man Standing Alone* by an unknown artist also evokes a sense of being cut off from the rest of the world. This collage of torn paper contains a light-colored silhouette of a figure on a dark brown background on about the left half of the composition. Although the figure is pointed toward the left, he looks back over his shoulder to the right half of the piece. On the right, bright orange and red paper create a sense of warmth, youth, and vitality. Unfortunately, though the figure may look at this optimism and life, his feet and course in life are pointed in the opposite direction. If he were to move anywhere on the composition, he would have to move deeper into the dark brown void. Many children in camps experienced similar fates. Although they knew and could see that life was continuing in other areas, they were cut off by the Nazis and forced to trudge through despair and death.

Drawings and Paintings

Other young artists decided to reproduce portions of their daily lives in their artworks. Some of these scenes innocently depict children at play or other, non-threatening moments of ghetto and camp life. Others, however, graphically reproduce common images of death and deprivation that children, although they may have been too young to fully understand the implications, saw and experienced.

Two young artists who began drawing during their internment in Nazi camps and who survived the war to become professional artists were Walter Spitzer and Helga

Weissova-Hoskova. Spitzer, Polish by birth, was sixteen years old when he was sent to work in one of the satellite camps around Auschwitz in 1943 (Blatter 264). Although he did not receive formal art training until after the war, Spitzer drew portraits and other sketches while in the camp that he sometimes traded for food (265). Weissova-Hoskova received the beginning of her art instruction at Theresienstadt between the ages of twelve and fourteen (*butterfly* 88-89). While at Theresienstadt, Weissova-Hoskova was able to keep a diary, and that written record and a number of her artistic works were able to survive the war (89). In 1944, Weissova-Hoskova was deported to Auschwitz and later worked in a factory in Dresden and spent time in Mauthausen (Blatter 267-268). After the war, she received formal art training at the Industrial Art School in Prague (268).

Both Spitzer and Weissova-Hoskova drew and painted scenes from their everyday experiences during internment. Spitzer's *Distribution of Soup* was drawn while in Buchenwald in 1945 (the camp from which Spitzer was liberated after enduring a death march to the camp from Auschwitz). This predominantly linear sketch depicts a long line of mostly faceless men holding soup bowls waiting to receive their ration from a large soup bucket. The soup is being doled out by a stout, muscular figure dressed in pants and rolled-up shirtsleeves. This figure is either a German guard or a *kapo*, a criminal prisoner who was put in charge of other prisoners. To the right of the line, a uniformed and armed officer watches over the meal distribution. This scene was probably played out before Spitzer's eyes daily.

Another scene from daily life was created by Weissova-Hoskova in Theresienstadt. *Checking for Lice* is an ink and watercolor composition of a bald man in a long white coat with a magnifying glass looking for lice in the hair of a Jewish female

internee. The piece also shows a partial view of the bunks, bedding, pots, and benches that furnished the Theresienstadt barracks. Lice and other infestations were common in both the ghettos and the internment camps, so Weissova-Hoskova probably witnessed similar "search" scenes on a regular basis.

However, both Spitzer and Weissova-Hoskova drew other, more gruesome scenes from the lives they encountered in the death camps. Both were capable of producing graphic, horrific, nightmarish scenes that they had witnessed while in Nazi custody.

Spitzer's *Square in Front of the Barracks* is an etching created at an unknown place and at an unknown time (Blatter 237). The composition is of a death camp scene with several skeletal figures, presumably all male, in the foreground. All of the men are in the advanced stages of malnutrition and are dressed in worn out clothing and rags. Several figures are lying down or are leaning on sticks or other figures, reinforcing the overall feel of exhaustion, despair, and disease. One seated figure near the center of the composition appears to be in conversation with another seated figure to his right. Other internees are gathered around to listen or just to sit outside for a few moments. In the background, smoke from the crematoria is visible, and two men are carrying a body on a stretcher toward the smoke. On the right side of the composition, one skeletal, black shrouded figure appears to be looking at the decay and carnage about him. Although his face is not really visible, it looks as though only a skull is half hidden beneath his cloak. Could this be Death, moving about among the prisoners, casting his approval on the "efficiency" of the camps? This figure is standing above a man who appears to be only skin and bones. Has Death silently collected another victim while those to be claimed later talk and try to carry on?

Weissova-Hoskova also created an ink sketch of a typical scene from a death camp. Created in Prague in 1945 (probably after the war), *Suicide on the Wire* is a graphic representation of a common form of suicide in the camps. A figure (presumably female although it is hard to tell whether it is male or female) is clothed in a thin gown of some kind. Several rows of barrack buildings are in the background, and the figure and the barracks are separated by a row of barbed wire fencing. Evidently, this figure had thrown herself against the wire in order to commit suicide. In many camps, barbed wire fences were either electrified or heavily guarded by machine guns. It was not uncommon for those who could not endure camp "life" for another moment to run into the wire in order to escape their "existence." Weissova-Hoskova's figure has one wrist hung on the wire while the rest of the body is contorted and about to fall backward. Weissova-Hoskova appears to have captured a suicide in the midst of the act, a scene she undoubtedly witnessed during her internment in the Nazi death camps of Auschwitz and Mauthausen.

One work created at Theresienstadt that stands out because of its strong statement of defiance is *Girl With Raised Fists*. This pencil sketch by Raja Englanderova was produced between 1942 and 1945 when the artist was between the ages of thirteen and sixteen. Englanderova, who survived the war, was a student of Friedl Dicker-Brandeis, the famous Bauhaus trained painter at Theresienstadt (*butterfly* 94). The sketch contains the side outline of the top third of a female figure who has both hands raised to about the level of her chin. The figure is facing left and the muscles of the left arm are large and fairly well defined. The expression on the girl's face is determined and hostile. Directly behind the figure in the background is a wooden door. The figure appears to be waiting

to attack any menacing presence that might try to gain entry through the door. This sketch is just one drawing out of the thousands produced at Theresienstadt that overtly declares the creator's desire to fight against oppression and to survive.

Conclusion

Although the number of existing creative works by children and young people during World War II and the Holocaust is low compared to the actual number of victims, subsequent generations can learn a great deal about the emotions, reactions, and desires of Jewish young people from their creative productions. Those few young people who were given the luxury of time, quiet, and creative impulse were able to convey eloquently various aspects of their existences in an enduring medium.

Most children knew the consequences of producing tangible works of creativity. As Deborah Dwork comments in her book, *Children With A Star: Jewish Youth in Nazi Europe*, "creating written or pictorial accounts was extraordinarily dangerous - foolhardy in fact. In a raid, all such physical documentation could be found and, if discovered, used as evidence which would lead to death or destruction" (xxiii). Children were aware of the repercussions of producing tangible creative works, but something within them would not or could not submit to Nazi censorship. Fortunately for us, these defiant young people actively engaged in a form of resistance that is both beautiful and frightening to behold. Without these gripping forms of creative expression, our ability to consider the enormous impact of the Holocaust on Jewish youth would be seriously curtailed.

One to one and one-half million members of a generation absent. Fortunately, not all of these victims vanished without a hint of their existence. Through their surviving testimonies, we can place more individual faces among that mass of humanity in order to

make their sufferings and their deaths more personal. Otherwise, we might be tempted to surrender each individual identity to the total number and neglect the fact that each addition to the sum was a human life. "Getting to know" these young people - their thoughts, dreams, and aspirations - also helps us to identify with them on a more intimate level, perhaps getting closer to Friedlander's ideas of touching and feeling and tasting their worlds (11).

The events of the Holocaust and World War II will never be conclusively summarized and laid to rest. There can never be peace associated with such calamitous events. Humanity, hopefully, will always feel unease and sadness when individual events, experiences, or people are considered. If we reach the point when the recollections and accounts of the Holocaust do not invoke grief, sadness, and bewilderment, humankind must not be surprised when another radical idealogue is able to gain power and to annihilate brutally sixteen million people.

In the post World War II world, people know that such atrocities and crimes against humanity can occur. Even more horrific, people also know that events such as those during the Holocaust and World War II can occur without the knowledge and/or concern of the rest of the world, that millions can be lost before the madness stops. Perhaps this knowledge keeps drawing scholars and laymen back to this particular time in history. Perhaps through study and reflection, the world can avoid another Holocaust.

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